

Standard 8-4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the impact of Reconstruction on the people and government of South Carolina.

8-4.5 Summarize the successes and failures that occurred in South Carolina during Reconstruction, including the bribery of legislators, corruption in political parties, the development of public education, and violence during the election of 1876. (H, P)

Taxonomy Level: B 2 Understand / Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In 3rd grade, students explained how the Civil War affected South Carolina's economy, including destruction of plantations, towns, factories, and transportation systems (3-4.3). They also summarized the effects of Reconstruction in South Carolina, including the development of public education, racial advancements and tensions, and economic changes (3-4.4).

In the 5th grade, students summarized the aims of Reconstruction and explained the effects of Abraham Lincoln's assassination on the course of Reconstruction (5-1.1). They also summarized the provisions of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, including how the amendments protected the rights of African Americans and sought to enhance their political, social, and economic opportunities (5-1.2). They compared the economic and social effects of Reconstruction on different populations (5.14) and explained the purpose and motivations behind the rise of discriminatory laws and groups and their effect on the rights and opportunities of African Americans in different regions of the United States (5-4.5).

In United States History, students will summarize the effects of Reconstruction on the southern states and the roles of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments in that era. (USHC-4.4)

It is essential for students to know:

Although the Republican government in South Carolina during Reconstruction was unsuccessful in quelling the actions of the Ku Klux Klan and other vigilante groups, it was successful in recognizing the political and social rights of African Americans, if only for a brief period. The Republican governments offered full political participation and citizenship to African Americans. The government distributed land through the Land Commission to a few African Americans. However, most African Americans were not allowed to achieve economic independence through land ownership. As a result of their lack of access to landownership, sharecropping, the crop lien system and continually falling prices of cotton, most remained economically dependent on southern whites and impoverished.

South Carolina state government, like both the national government and most other state governments throughout the United States, was plagued by corruption. The South Carolina statehouse, like the city hall in Philadelphia, was a testament to the inflated costs brought by bribery. Despite the corruption of individuals, the Republican government during Reconstruction left an enduring legacy. They established social service programs such as state-supported institutions for the blind and the deaf and made public health care a concern of the government in South Carolina. Most importantly, they established **public schools** for all children for the first time.

However, these schools also raised taxes that whites claimed were bankrupting them. Exaggerating the corruption of the inexperienced African-American legislators and playing on northern racism, white South Carolinians effectively manipulated the Northern press with propaganda about the incompetence of the Republican government. They blamed the rising tax rate on corruption when it was largely due to

new state services such as public schools. Consequently the northern public tired of Reconstruction and gave up hope of changing Southern attitudes and way of life.

Reconstruction ended in South Carolina with violence and controversy. The Hamburg Massacre of 1876 took place in a predominantly African-American town in Aiken County. Six black militia members were killed by a white mob. This incident marked an intensification of the white campaign to “redeem” South Carolina’s government. White Democrat “Red Shirts” coordinated a campaign of violence, intimidation and fraud in order to win the election of 1876. President Grant sent more federal troops but they could not assure a free and fair election. Voting irregularities threw the governor’s election into the General Assembly but there were also disputes about who was elected to the state legislature. Two rival governments were established, one Republican and one white Democrat. There was a stand-off as white taxpayers refused to support the Republican government.

Election irregularities also plagued the national election. The electoral votes of three southern states, including South Carolina, were in dispute. The resolve of Congress to protect the freedmen had waned in the face of continuing resistance of southerners as well as the corruption of the Grant administration, economic depression in the North and issues related to increased migration to the West. Democrats and Republicans reached a compromise whereby Democrats would recognize the election of Republican President Hayes in exchange for the withdrawal of federal troops from the South. President Hayes withdrew the last of the federal troops from South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana. The Conservative Democratic Party under former Confederate General, now Governor, Wade Hampton took control of the government of South Carolina and African Americans were left to fend for themselves in a hostile environment.

It is not essential for students to know:

Students do not need to know the names of individuals in South Carolina, such as Governors Scott or Moses, or the nation, such as Boss Tweed, who were accused of bribery and corruption, only that it was rampant. Students do not need to know that this era is sometimes referred to as the “Era of Good Stealings” because of this corruption or the Gilded Age because conditions seemed golden on the outside but were base metal and corrupt underneath. They do not need to know the details of the violence of the Red Shirt campaign in 1876 or the details of voter fraud except that it was widespread. It is not essential for students to know the complex negotiations that led to the Compromise of 1876 or its other provisions such as a promise to grant Southerners more jobs in the federal government and to help to rebuild the Southern infrastructure. Students need only remember that this compromise led to the abandonment of the African Americans in the South to the political will of their former masters.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessment will require students to be able to **summarize** the successes and failures of the Reconstruction era. Students should be able to **compare** the bribery and corruption of the Reconstruction government with the violence of the white backlash. They should be able to **explain** the significance of public education. Students should be able to **interpret** maps, graphs and political cartoons and **infer** their relationship to information about the time period.